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Media Contact: KaZoua Berry
Big River Farms Education Manager
kberry@thefoodgroupmn.org | 651-504-8105

Regional Conference Offers Educational Resources to Emerging Farmers

Annual event creates space for a diverse group of farmers to connect and learn

(Twin Cities, Minn.) – Big River Farms and The Food Group are proud to announce their sixteenth annual Emerging Farmers Conference (EFC). Due to COVID-19, the 2021 EFC will be held virtually, enabling greater participation from farmers throughout the country. The virtual 2021 EFC will happen **Friday, January 29 and Saturday, January 30**. Virtual evening workshops will also be offered leading up to the conference. **All farmers may attend for free** by registering online at emergingfarmers.org

This innovative conference offers New American (immigrant and refugee) and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous & People of Color) farmers with the necessary tools for building profitable agricultural businesses. The conference supports the success and sustainability of farmers who face systemic barriers to accessing educational, financial, and land-based resources. Conference participants can actively connect with one another while fostering relationships with sustainable farming advocates and educators.

The 2021 EFC theme is *“Reclaiming Our Voices: For Farmers, by Farmers, with Farmers”*. Topics include profitable farming, pest/disease management, scaling to wholesale, record keeping, value-added production, land access and conservation, grant opportunities, and more. Interpretation services are available in Spanish, Hmong, Karen, Somali, and other languages based on pre-event registrations.

This year’s keynote speaker is Tiffany LaShae, a grower, educator, and activist who has farmed around the world. Her current work includes Climate Smart Agriculture efforts with farmers in Benin and Zambia, and urban and rural soils research with the University of Minnesota. Ms. LaShae will explore a conversation with EFC participants about on- and off-farm actions that can be taken to redefine local perceptions of what it means to be an “emerging” farmer. “Right now is the time for those that have been silenced historically to take action. I hope to encourage BIPOC and immigrant farmers to gain power and access,” says Ms. LaShae.

For assistance with interpretation services or event registration, please contact Big River Farms Education Manager KaZoua Berry at kberry@thefoodgroupmn.org or 651-504-8105.



The Emerging Farmers Conference (EFC) is funded in part by grants from the USDA’s Beginning Farmer Rancher Development Program at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and by the Conservation Innovation Grants Program at USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service.

EFC is co-hosted by a range of partners whose financial sponsorship allows farmers to attend free of charge. Major 2021 EFC sponsors include AgCountry Farm Credit, Albert Lea Seed, Compeer Financial, Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College, Healthy Foods Healthy Lives Institute, Lakewinds Food Co-op, Land Stewardship Project, MN Dept. of Agriculture (MDA), MDA Produce Safety Program, Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Service (MOSES), Sustainable Farming Assoc., The Good Acre, University of Minnesota Extension, CoBank, Latino Economic Development Center, Renewing the Countryside, and NCR SARE. Additional details at emergingfarmers.org.

Big River Farms (BRF), a program of [The Food Group](http://TheFoodGroup.org), offers land access and education in organic agriculture to immigrants, refugees, people of color, and others who face discrimination. Big River Farms strengthens our community by building a more sustainable and just food system. The Food Group is a Minnesota nonprofit focused on using nutritious food to strengthen community. Additional details at bigriverfarms.org.